DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 292 338 FL 017 255

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TITLE Rural FLES Models: Teachers and Students Learning a Foreign Language.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 10p.; In: Lalande, John F. II, Ed., Shaping the Future of Language Education: FLES, Articulation, and Proficiency. Report of Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language; see FL 017 249.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Curriculum Development; Elementary Education; *FLES; Higher Education; Intensive Language Courses; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Introductory Courses; Program Descriptions; *Program Design; *Rural Schools; *Second Language Programs; Spanish; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Morgan County School System TN; University of Tennessee Knoxville

ABSTRACT

The foreign language education program in the department of curriculum and instruction at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville has worked with the Morgan County School System to develop a foreign language experience (FLEX) program in Spanish for that district. The program has three phases: (1) 1 year of in-service instruction in language and methodology for the 28 volunteering K-4 teachers, (2) development of an interdisciplinary curriculum, and (3) intensive language training for 11 lead teachers. The program has become the only district-wide FLEX program in the state, and it is taught by monolingual elementary classroom teachers. Near the end of the initial teacher training period, a group of the participating teachers requested additional Spanish training and the opportunity to design an interdisciplinary curriculum. An off-campus graduate class incorporating both language instruction and curriculum design was created for the interested teachers. The third phase of the program is a combined year-long graduate course for the 11 lead teachers and in-service training for the other 17. The program illustrates how a university and a school district can cooperate to fund, plan, and implement a special linguistic enrichment experience for both classroom teachers and their students. (MSE)

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Rural FLES Models: Teachers and Students Learning a Foreign Language

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FLES, or the study of foreign languages in the elementary schools, is alive, well, and prospering across the nation. The latest survey conducted by the Center for Language Education and Research (Rhodes and Oxford, 4) reported that 22 percent of the nation's elementary schools are presently teaching foreign languages. Although this certainly is a far cry from the all-time low of 1 percent of elementary school systems offering programs in 1983 (Ranbom, 3), or the figure of approximately 73 percent in the late 1950s (NEA, 2, p. 113), the results of this survey are indeed encouraging.

Since 1982 the University of Tennessee—Knoxville (UTK), has responded to community requests that we plan and implement FLES programs. The programs implemented include:

1. The Knox County FLEX (Foreign Language Experience) Program. Started in 1982, it has expanded to nine elementary school sites where every third-grader receives thirty minutes of language instruction in French, Spanish, or German twice a week. UTK foreign language education students and graduates of the program are the instructors.
2. Middle School Foreign Language Introductory Course. This program is an integral component of the UTK Foreign Language Methods block in which all preservice language teachers teach a

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three-week FLEX course to students in a Knoxville middle school.

3. BONJOUR. This series consists of thirty ten to fifteen-minute video lessons in French language and culture, accompanied by six review tapes, a teacher's curriculum guide/workbook, coloring book, and audiocassettes. The Center for Extended Learning at the University piloted this FLEX program statewide in the winter and spring of 1987, servicing over 1,000 kindergartners.
4. Morgan County Spanish FLEX Program. Begun in 1986, this FLEX program is offered districtwide in grades K–4. This article will present a description of the Morgan County FLEX program, focusing specifically on its organization, curriculum development and content, funding, and staffing.

Morgan County School System

Morgan County School System is one of 141 school systems in the state of Tennessee. Its profile, however, shows several unusual features. The county is one of Tennessee's most rural (farming is its principal economic activity) and sparsely populated counties. Over 92 percent of its 3,372 students must be bused to and from school, and over 60 percent are on a free or reduced-cost lunch program. Morgan County School System has seven schools, six of which incorporate elementary grades K–6.

Request for a FLEX Program

In the spring of 1986, the Foreign Language Education Program in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at UTK was approached by the language arts coordinator for the Morgan County School System to establish a FLEX program in the district. Monies from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) had been requested in order to enrich the elementary curricular offerings, with the addition of a Spanish FLEX program being viewed as a major priority. Unfortunately, the grant was not funded. Morgan County, however, was committed to the

FLEX program and creatively utilized internal funding to initiate the project.

The challenges of embarking upon such a program were many: program design, identifying realistic expectations and performance levels of classroom teachers and children involved, curricular planning, classroom teacher in-servicing, and funding for the program's implementation.

Program Design

It was decided that the new FLEX program in Morgan County would need to be established in three phases: (1) initial language and methodology in-servicing of the twenty-eight K–4 classroom teachers over a period of one academic year (1986–87); (2) development of the interdisciplinary curriculum to be implemented (spring 1987); and, (3) intensive language training of eleven "lead" FLEX teachers and concurrent in-servicing of seventeen other participating FLEX teachers (1987–88).

Expectations and Performance Levels

This ambitious project would establish the only districtwide FLEX program in Tennessee and it would be taught by monolingual elementary classroom teachers. Therefore, it was particularly important to set realistic expectations for the intended FLEX teachers and their students. Since the majority of classroom teachers to be trained had minimal or no previous experience with Spanish, it was decided that a Defense Language Institute proficiency level of 0+ would be the expected language performance level of the FLEX teachers by the end of their training. The same "awareness level" and internalization of basic greetings, classroom vocabulary, and introduction to Hispanic culture would be the anticipated functional performance level of the FLEX elementary students at the end of the year-long program.

Initial In-Servicing of Future FLEX Teachers

Twenty-eight classroom teachers (from the six Morgan County elementary schools) volunteered to become FLEX teachers in their district. The language arts coordinator from the district then scheduled

monthly in-service sessions throughout the 1986–87 academic year. During these sessions the K–4 teachers were taught the basic Spanish and Hispanic cultural "tidbits" that they would then teach to their students. This was probably one of the biggest professional career challenges of the foreign language teacher training staff—and one of the most rewarding.

The in-service sessions went rather smoothly, considering the fact that they were usually given at the end of a long elementary school day. The teachers, albeit visibly fatigued, were always eager to learn new Spanish vocabulary items, songs, and cultural information to integrate through the school day with their children following each in-service session. The in-service leader used a variety of multisensory techniques during the session, including Total Physical Response (Asher, 1), foreign language rhythmics[1] (Wiley, 5), role-playing, and animated drills using props. Elaborate handouts with the content of each training session, and a schedule for its implementation following each in-service session, accompanied by an audiocassette of all vocabulary, expressions, and songs, were given to all the teachers following each session. An abbreviated list of the in-service curriculum follows:

Kindergarten
1–10
hello; good-bye; good morning; good afternoon
What is your name? My name is . . . (by end of year)
red, blue, black, white, green, yellow, orange, brown, purple, gray
head, arms, legs, hands, mouth
table, chair, windows, door, teacher
dog, cat
hat, coat
Songs: "Frey Felipe," "Uno, Dos, Tres Niñitos/Gatitos/Indios," "Cascabeles," "Las Posadas"
First Grade (add the following to the above vocabulary)
1–100 (by 10s), 1–50 (by 1s)
days of the week, months of the year
Where do you live? . . . I live in . . .
mother, father, brother, sister
pink, silver, gold

eyes, ears, nose; fingers, toes, hair
Second Grade (add the following to the above vocabulary)
1–100 (by 1s)
calendar dates, phone numbers
grandparents, aunt/uncle, cousins
directions, (turn) left, (turn) right, straight ahead
light/dark colors and modification of simple nouns
teeth, nails, shoulder, elbow, knee, back, stomach

The Spanish language and its culture made a visible imprint on every one of the six elementary schools in the district. Bulletin board displays stressing numbers, colors, or some cultural point were prominent not only in individual classrooms but in the main school halls as well.

In addition, FLEX teachers used Spanish to denote the date on their blackboards, to call their children to order ("silencio, por favor"), and to line up their children when leaving the room. The utilization of Spanish in the classroom served not only as a way to get the children back on-task from an activity, but also as a reinforcement of basic skills taught during the course of the school day. Most FLEX teachers excitedly reported that whenever they wanted to get their students' total attention, all they had to do was use Spanish and the children immediately responded.

One of the highlights of the first year's Spanish FLEX program was a special assembly put on by the kindergarten and first-grade classes of one school. Parents and school officials attended the hour-long assembly during which the children performed Spanish dances, sang songs, and demonstrated their ability to count to 20, exchange basic greetings, and identify ten colors in Spanish. Excerpts of the assembly and interviews with the FLEX teachers were telecast during the evening news of one local television station that had been invited to attend the assembly.

Interdisciplinary Curricular Planning

In the spring of 1987, a group of the twenty-eight K–4 classroom teachers requested the opportunity to extend their Spanish language training and to design an interdisciplinary curriculum. An off-campus graduate school class on site in Morgan County (over one hour's drive

from UTK) was designed and subsequently offered to those interested in the project.

Participants in the class represented all content areas offered in the elementary schools and worked with the instructor to identify vocabulary, expressions, suggested activities, and required materials they felt would be appropriate to be introduced through the medium of Spanish in the classroom. Five levels of content each were identified for art, health, language arts, library, mathematics, music, physical education, science, and social studies. Intensive language instruction was given, with a third of each of the students in the graduate class at a time, while the remaining members of the class concurrently worked on designing an appropriate curriculum.

At the end of the spring quarter, two advanced foreign language education graduate students at UTK (one a native Spanish speaker), translated the teachers' curricular suggestions into Spanish and organized and typed the interdisciplinary guide. In addition, two audiocassettes of all vocabulary, expressions, and appendices (name list for boys and girls, the Spanish alphabet, bilingual glossary) contained in the guide were recorded in the university's radio studio by the native Spanish speaker. Funding for the procurement of textbooks for the graduate course and the production of the interdisciplinary guide was awarded through a THEC (Tennessee Higher Education Commission) grant.

The following is a page taken from the science section of the Morgan County Spanish Curriculum Guide:

Science Level I
Ciencia Nivel I

Objectives: The learner will be able to identify and pronounce the vocabulary words. The learner will be able to identify the written vocabulary words.

Vocabulary:	**Vocabulario:**
dog	el perro
puppy	el perrito
cat	el gato
kitten	el gatito
water	el agua
day	el día
night	la noche

Activities: Introduce the vocabulary by showing pictures of what each word represents and simultaneously pronouncing the word. Drill individually and in groups for concept identification and pronunciation. Place the pictures of the vocabulary on a bulletin board and label them in Spanish and English.

Tell students a story using animal names in Spanish. Tell the story again, letting students read or say the animal name in Spanish when the vocabulary card is flashed.

Have students color a picture of each animal. Then have students trace over both the English and Spanish word for that animal. Display this work on the wall.

Put the Spanish name for water above a sink or water fountain. Have students ask for water using the Spanish name for it. Have students draw pictures of day, night, and water. Have students trace over the Spanish and English terms for these.

Materials: Pictures of animals, day, night, water; paper, pencils, crayons, worksheets.

Intensive Language Training/Continued In-Servicing

Phase three of the Morgan County FLEX program is in progress at this writing. The format of this aspect of the program is unique in that the training received by the twenty-eight classroom participants is a combined year-long graduate course for eleven of the teachers and in-service training for the other seventeen. Each class/in-service session lasts three hours. Those taking the course for in-service credit, however, leave after the second hour of class; those taking the course for credit remain for the third hour.

Class meetings/in-service training sessions are scheduled at three-week intervals over the entire 1987–88 academic year. Books, materials, and tuition costs of the graduate course/in-service training are funded through THEC grant monies and other state discretionary funding to Morgan County. At least two additional in-service sessions for all interested educators in Morgan County have been scheduled for the introduction of the new interdisciplinary curriculum guide.

Conclusion

The Morgan County Spanish FLEX Program is a wonderful example of a school district and a university working cooperatively together to fund, plan, and implement a special linguistic enrichment experience for both classroom teachers in the school district and their students. This is the only FLEX program in Tennessee conducted entirely by regular elementary classroom teachers and taught as part of the curriculum during the school day. It is also the only totally interdisciplinary FLEX program in the state, and as such, will serve as a model for other Tennessee school systems in the future.

For further information concerning this program, please contact: Professor Patricia Davis Wiley, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, The University of Tennessee, 218 Claxton Education Building, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-3400.

Note

[1] "Foreign language rhythmics" is a technique that was developed by this writer and has become very popular, especially with the elementary school children. The method works as follows:
A portable electric keyboard, such as Casio PT-1 with built-in rhythm, is used to produce musical patterns that are emulated by the students using the target language. The following are a few examples of foreign language utterances accompanying different electronically produced rhythms: *Beguine*: Comment allez-vous?; *Rock 1*: ¡Buenos Dias!; *March*: Ça va?; *4-Beat*: numbers; *Swing*: Bonjour; *Samba*: ¿Dónde vive usted? Où habitez-vous? Yo vivo en la calle . . . ; *Rock 2*: verb conjugations.

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